

January 1, 2017

The Mysterious Gift

by Arpi Nakashian



"The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed according to their own kinds, and trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." (Gen 1:12).

Throughout the centuries, the pomegranate has been weaved into Armenian architecture, cuisine, art, manuscripts, literature, liturgical vestments and accessories. For the first time in history in 2015, the Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Church, His Holiness Karekin II, Catholicos of all Armenians, together with the Armenian faithful, introduced a new service for the Blessing of Pomegranates, one of the seven biblical species of fruits and grains, at the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin.

Christians have seen in the pomegranate an image of the Church: the seeds may be separated by a membrane, but they are undivided. The seeds are in communion, just like us, the faithful of the Church, acting as one body without losing our individuality in the Church; through the blood of Christ, we become greater than the sum of our parts! The striking red color of the fruit reminds us of Christ's blood and suffering, and the calyx (head) of the pomegranate represents Christ's crown as the King of kings.

For the various cultures of the Mediterranean region, the fruit represents life, fertility, and abundance. The pomegranate has numerous health benefits due to its high antioxidant content, and is the subject of research for its effects on cancer, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes among other conditions. Long before science revealed the healing powers of the pomegranate, the Christian Armenians have associated this biblical fruit with the mystery of the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This mysterious, life giving, and delicious fruit needs to be unwrapped like a gift to reveal its beauty and nutrition. This miraculous and sacred fruit reminds us of the message of the Gospel. When the plain shell of the pomegranate is burst, we see the gems that it contains; similarly, one needs to dig deeply into the Christian faith to uncover its sweet treasures. At the core of that Christian teaching is the figure of Jesus, who in every way was an ordinary mortal human, yet revealed himself to be the incarnate Creator and Savior of the universe.

As we welcome the new year, may each of us reveal like pomegranates the sweet treasure of goodness planted in us by our Lord. May the new year be fruitful and abundantly filled with God's unconditional love.

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CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Donations towards the purchase of Christmas Poinsettias for our altar have been given -

- by the *Ararat Association*, with "best wishes for Happy Holidays and a healthy 2017," Alan Zartarian, President.
- in loving memory of *Kaspar* and *Ehsig Topalian* and *Rosalie Topalian-Jones* (WA) by Griego-Marottolo (CT) Family.
- in loving memory of *George* and *Irene Zartarian*, by Robert Zartarian.
- in loving memory of *Nishan & Angela Karagozian* by Charles and Susan Karagozian.
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- in loving memory of *Ani Elora Emdjian* by Aurora Emdjian and Garo Emdjian.
- in loving memory of all *Emdjian Family Deceased Members* by Aurora Emdjian and Garo Emdjian.
- in loving memory of *Diramayr Rose* Chevian by Mary Brown.
- in loving memory of *Deron Hazian* by the Hazian/Dichiro Family.
- in loving memory of the Masoian and Janigian Family Members.
- in loving memory of the Parnagian Family - Sema, Manoog, Mary, Barsam & James W. Antranig - by Sema Jean Santilli.

