

Vemkar Virtual Pilgrimage: Tomb of Christ
Pilgrim Digital Package



CONTENT

01 Welcome & Introduction

02 Pilgrimage Preparation (*Optional, but highly recommended!*)

Instructions

Fasting

Silent Walk (or Sitting) instructions

Resources

03 Pilgrimage Preparation Schedule

04 Virtual Pilgrimage Itinerary on Zoom (April 9)

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WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Vemkar Virtual Pilgrimage!

A pilgrimage is going to a place that's holy for someone. These Holy places can be different for each person depending on their background and beliefs. For many Armenians, of course, that place is Jerusalem and her surrounding areas. Ever since the 1st century, Armenians have traveled to witness and experience the region where the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was born, where he ministered, was tortured, crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Many Armenians even decided to stay in the Holy Land and build monasteries... today, we still use some of these locations to dwell in and of course worship!

St. Basil from the 4th century makes a case for a spiritual pilgrimage, one that we don't have to travel. If you're not going to Jerusalem in your heart he says, so what's the point of going to Jerusalem? A pilgrimage of course is different than just a trip or a tour, it's an intentional act of sacrifice to transform oneself spiritually, mentally, and sometimes even physically.

What makes this virtual pilgrimage unique is seeing the Tomb of Christ through the Armenian eye!

For those who have been on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, this virtual pilgrimage will be an experience to discover some of the forgotten or untold treasures of the Tomb of Christ and our Lord himself, in the Armenian Church's tradition.

For those who plan on going to the Holy Land in the future, this will be an experience that sets a foundation for what to expect and what to look for when you're at the Holy Sepulcher!

For those who aren't able to go to Jerusalem in person, as much as we can, we are bringing the Holy Land experience and knowledge to you!

Our ultimate destination on this and every pilgrimage is finding our way closer to God and improving our relationship with him through a deeper understanding and exploration of the holy places of our Lord Jesus Christ's hometown!

PILGRIMAGE PREPARATION INSTRUCTIONS

We have designed a three-day preparation regimen for the virtual pilgrimage. It includes daily prayer and fasting in order to prepare our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies to properly for this virtual quest.

Fasting instructions: Before all the major feasts in the Armenian Church, there is a period of fasting that takes place, ranging from five days to fifty days. The period of Great Lent or *Medz Bahk* (Great Fast), however, is a forty-day fast preceding Holy Week (another week-long fast) in preparation for the Feast of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is our prayer that in the days leading up to our departure for Vemkar's Virtual Pilgrimage, during the period of Great Lent, we enter into a period of prayer and fasting so that our lives change, our faith grows, and our hope remains in Jesus Christ. Traditionally, the Armenian Church adopts a vegan diet during periods of fasting, but you may prefer to choose an alternative option such as skipping a meal or two entirely, or refraining from luxurious foods and beverages. To learn about fasting in the Armenian Church [click here](#). See the itinerary for fasting days.

Great Lent is a time for inner reflection and conversion, an opportunity to reprioritize and reorient ourselves toward God from whom we continually drift and turn our backs. This year, Great Lent has particular meaning, as the faithful of the Armenian Church have experienced a time of great pain, suffering, injustice, and loss. Where is our hope? What can we do? Surely, we can do what our Armenian Christian ancestors have always done during times of trial and hopelessness. Like them, we can confidently turn to God in prayer, not as a last resort, but as a primary and immediate expression of dependence on God.

Silent Walking (or Sitting): Many pilgrims walked barefoot or went on their knees to visit various Holy Sites. In order to identify with the experience of traveling as a pilgrim, we recommend that you set aside a dedicated amount of time to walk silently and prayerfully. We suggest allotting about 15-20 minutes at least for this activity, but if you are unable to do so, as an alternative activity, you might try prayerfully sitting in silence for 15-20 minutes or more.

Resources: Multimedia resources are included in the preparation schedule to further enhance the pilgrim's understanding of the Holy Land, as well as our Lord, Jesus Christ. Please feel free to devote as much time as you would like to these resources on the days when they are scheduled.

PREPARATION SCHEDULE

April 6

Fast Day

- Start day by reciting the [Lenten Prayer Rule](#)
- Watch: [Explore the region around the Holy Sepulcher Church](#)
- Silent Walk/Prayerful Sitting

April 7

Annunciation of Gabriel to the Mother of God

- Start day by reciting the [Marian Prayer Rule](#)
- Watch this [video capturing the inside of the Holy Sepulcher Church](#)
- Silent Walk/Prayerful Sitting
- Attend Badarak at a local parish

April 8

Fast Day

- Start day by reciting the [Lenten Prayer Rule](#)
- [Watch: Bread & Salt: The Holy Fire](#)
- Silent Walk/Prayerful Sitting

April 9 (Virtual Pilgrimage Day | see full itinerary below)

Remembrance of the Resurrection of Lazarus

- [Read: John 11:1-54](#)
- Join the Virtual Pilgrimage on Zoom at 10:00 am (if you haven't yet, [register here](#))

VIRTUAL PILGRIMAGE ZOOM ITINERARY (APRIL 9)

10:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Welcome | Yervant
Introduction | Fr. Ghevond Ajamian
Opening Message & Blessing | Bishop Daniel Findikyan
Recitation of the “Heenoonk” Prayer Rule

10:30 AM - 11:00 AM

The Empty Tomb | Arpi Nakashian

11:15 AM - 12:30 PM

Tomb of Christ: Liturgically Looking at the Empty Tomb | Rev. Fr. Antreas Garabedian
Sacred Music: Explanation & Teaching | Rev. Fr. Haroutiun Sabounjian & Very Rev. Fr. Mamigon Kiledjian ([Translation](#)) ([Notation](#))

12:30 PM - 1:30 PM

Break

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Harrowing of Hell | Dn. Eric Vozzy

2:15 PM - 3:00 PM

Recovering the Empty Tomb | Dr. Roberta Ervine

3:00 PM - 3:30 PM

Break

3:30 PM - 3:45 PM

Mahdesi at the Tomb | [Nora Knadjian]

3:45 PM - 4:30 PM

Recovering the Empty Tomb II | Dr. Roberta Ervine

4:30 PM

Closing Prayer / Q&A