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Great Barekendan

(Genesis, Chapter 2)

Although this Sunday is not a day of Lent (as the five Sundays following it are), the Armenian Church opens the series of Sundays of Lent with Barekendan. To distinguish this Sunday from the other ten Barekendan Sundays, it is called “great” or “Real Barekendan”. The word “Barekendan” means joyful, happy and vital living. For this reason, the first Barekendan Sunday is marked especially by general festivities.

No other Sunday among the Church Sundays is observed so carefully as this one, though corrupted from its original meaning. It may be assumed that these festivities are due, perhaps, to the re-alization of the onset of the forty to fiftydays of Lent. Consequently, people would be making the most out of the occasion thus presented to enjoy food and have a good time. This opinion, however, is only partly correct.

In fact, Great Barekendan commemorates the happy, careless and innocent life of the ancestors of Mankind – Adam and Eve – in Paradise.

This Sunday, besides reminding us that man is created happy and put in a happy environment, suggests also the idea that man is destined to everlasting happiness. The Holy Bible, as well as man’s experience, testifies to the truthfulness of this idea. A child under normal conditions (not perfect or ideal conditions) is the happiest creature in the universe. His happiness is seldom dependent upon outsiders but springs from within his little self. A heap of sand is enough to make him happy for hours. The mere appearance of a butterfly suffices to set his heart a-tremble with boundless enjoyment. It is as if everything in nature exists to make him happy.

A child truly comprises in himself/herself and symbolizes the infancy of the human race. And, to be sure, the days in Paradise of Adam and Eve – our ancestors – remind us all the attractions of our own childhood and the beauty of such projections, all found to be recorded in the first pages of the Bible. The day when the child starts to distinguish between “good and evil”, the moment “his eyes are opened” ... he begins to lose his innocence of childhood and his happiness as well. The next Sunday will explain this idea more.