

Visit to the Communities of the Orthodox Resistance in the Caucasus, and a “Pilgrimage” to Pontos, in Asia Minor

WITH the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone traveled by road, via Turkey, to the communities of the Orthodox in resistance in South Ossetia and Georgia, in the Caucasus. Accompanying him were Mr. Anastasios Vasilopoulos, from Melissia, Attika, and our brother in Christ, Hilarion, a resident of Thessaloniki who is of Georgian descent.

• **On Wednesday**, September 6, 2007 (Old Style), following a long and tiring journey, Bishop Ambrose arrived in the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, where he was warmly greeted by the local Hierarchy, His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania (a member of the Holy Synod in Resistance), the clergy, and many of the faithful.

The next day, His Grace had the opportunity to meet with the President of South Ossetia, Mr. Kokoity, the Prime Minister, Mr. Morazov, and other government members.



On Friday, September 8, 2007 (Old Style), the Feast of the Nativity of the *Theotokos*, His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania and His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone concelebrated at the old Diocesan Cathedral, which was celebrating its Feast Day. Taking part in the Divine Liturgy were three Priests (Fathers Alexey, Yakov, and George), Deacon Father Nicholas, a number of Subdeacons and servers. A large crowd of Orthodox faithful was in attendance, including members of government, a troop of Cossack soldiers from Russia and the Ukraine, mothers of children killed during the terrorist acts in Beslan, North Ossetia, and others.



His Grace also made visits and held consultations to deal with certain difficulties and to provide for better organization of an Orthodox witness in this sorely-tried region of the Caucasus.



• **Bishop Ambrose** then went to Georgia, where he visited various ancient historic monasteries and religious monuments in this country.

On Sunday, September 10, 2007 (Old Style), His Grace Liturgized with the parish Priest, Father Vakhtang Mariani, at the newly-built Church of the *Panagia Portaitissa*, in Gldani, Tbilisi (the capital of Georgia). Many hundreds of Orthodox Georgians were in attendance. Here as well, by the Grace of God, Bishop Ambrose gave a message of consolation and a testimony of goodwill, bringing joy and comfort to the flock of the Orthodox in resistance in Georgia, who are likewise much-afflicted.



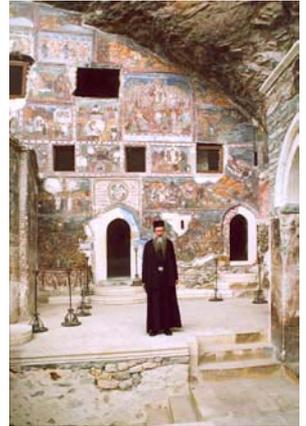
• **On Monday**, September 11, 2007 (Old Style), during his return journey by ground transport, via Turkey, Bishop Ambrose had the opportunity to visit some of the Greek Orthodox monuments of legendary Pontos—among the few that remain as relics of a glorious age and history.



Thus, in Trabzon (Trebizond), he visited the historic Churches of the *Panagia* of Chrysokephalos, of the Holy Great Martyr Evgenios the Wonderworker, Patron Saint of Trebizond (see photo at left), of St. Anna, and of Holy Wisdom, with its superb frescoes.

He also ascended high up in the mountains, among the clouds, to the famous Convent of the *Panagia* of Sumela, which is perched on a steep and rugged mountainside, with its cave Church, where renovations are already underway for reasons of tourism.

Then, after passing through the cities of Giresun, Ordu (Kotyora), Ünye, Samsun, etc., he once again visited the monuments of the Imperial City, including—for the first time—the tomb of the Holy New Martyr Argyre at the Church of St. Paraskeve of Pikridio.



• **Around midnight** on Tuesday, September 12, 2007 (Old Style), Bishop Ambrose and his companions arrived in Thessaloniki and thus completed, with God's help, yet another fruitful ecclesiastical mission, with a wealth of moving memories of these unforgettable countries!

