

## Pastoral Visit to Georgia

**B**y the Grace of God, His Grace, Bishop Ambrose of Methone made his customary annual visit to Georgia, as representative of His Eminence, Metropolitan Cyprian, who is ailing, and of our Holy Synod, in order to celebrate the Feast of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* together with the small flock of the Orthodox in resistance in this country.

He landed in Tbilisi on Tuesday, August 13, 2008 (Old Style), and remained in Georgia until Sunday, August 18.

Owing to the wartime situation, he was not able to enter neighboring South Ossetia to visit those Orthodox under His Eminence, Bishop George of Alania, who have survived the warfare in this sorely-tried region, which has recently been the center of worldwide attention.

In Georgia, Bishop Ambrose commiserated with the mourning, comforted the refugees, the wounded, and the sorrowing, but also rejoiced with the struggling faithful of the anti-ecumenist Orthodox Eparchy of Gldani in Tbilisi at their ecclesiastical progress and growth.



The presence of the leader of this Eparchy, Protopresbyter Basili Mkalavishvili—who was only recently released after four and a half years of imprisonment, having been sentenced for supposed acts of violence against the heterodox—once again among the flock constitutes a source of joy and hope for the further witness and ministry of the Orthodox in resistance in Georgia, within, to be sure, the framework of the canonical Tradition and pious ethos of our Holy Orthodox Faith.

Bishop Ambrose liturgized on the Dormition of the *Theotokos*, and again on the Sunday after the Feast, in the newly-built, immense Cathe-



dral of the *Panagia Portaitissa*, in Gldani, Tbilisi, with Father Basili and his assistant, Father Vakhtang Mariani, in the presence of many hundreds of Orthodox Georgians.

During his brief sojourn in Georgia, Bishop Ambrose visited the Church of St. George in Nakhshirgora, the birthplace of Father Basili, where a Supplicatory Canon was chanted to the *Panagia*. He also visited an ancient Church (fifth century) in the city of Bolnisi and a neighboring monastery.



The progress of our anti-ecumenist flock in Georgia, despite the various difficulties, is reckoned a blessing from God, and the visit of Bishop Ambrose contributed significantly to its consolidation and to its advancement in Christ.

