



Pastoral Visit to the Holy Land of Georgia

August 13-19, 2014 (Old Style)

Under the protection of the *Panagia Portaitissa* “the Iberian,” of St. Nina, Equal to the Apostles and Enlightener of Georgia (Iberia), and of the Holy Great Martyr George, we were once again vouchsafed to visit the Holy Land of Georgia.

A party of ten pilgrims from Greece, consisting of six laypeople, two nuns from the Convent of the Holy Angels, and a Subdeacon from the Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, under the spiritual leadership of Metropolitan Cyprian of Oropos and Phyle, arrived in the blessed land of Georgia on Tuesday, August 13/26, 2014.

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Following our blessed Union (March 5, 2014 [Old Style]) with the Synod of His Beatitude, Archbishop Kallinikos, this visit was of particular significance, in that the Holy Synod has designated Metropolitan Cyprian *Locum Tenens* of the newly established Diocese of Gldani, Tbilisi.

We were given an extremely moving welcome, both at the Tbilisi airport and again at the Cathedral Church of the *Panagia Portaitissa* in Gldani, where countless faithful, bearing Icons and chanting hymns, led by our four Priests in Georgia, enthusiastically received the *Locum Tenens* with expressions of profound respect and trust.

The main purpose of our visit was, first, to participate in the Great Feast of the Dormition of the *Theotokos*—when the Cathedral in Gldani celebrates its Patronal Feast—and, second, to make contact with the clergy and laity now united under one Synod, so as to cultivate profound bonds of love and unity in Christ.

By the Grace of God, strong impetus was given in the direction of this latter goal by the Festal Divine Liturgy on the Dormition of the *Theotokos*



and the participation of the *Locum Tenens* in the Divine Liturgies celebrated at two other—smaller, but Grace-filled and blessed—Churches: the Church of the Dormition of the *Theotokos* in Tbilisi, on Saturday, August 17 (Old Style) (Rector: Father Gabriel Nebieridze) and the Church of the Resurrection, also in Tbilisi, on Monday, August 19 (Old Style) (Rector: Hieromonk Grigol [Gregory] Kobakhitze).



The Church of St. Nina
in Mtskheta.

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In all places and at all times during our visit, we were shown sincere love and the renowned and inimitable traditional Georgian hospitality.

We made pilgrimages to the chief holy places of Georgia: the ancient capital of Mtskheta, the Convent of St. Nina, the tombs of the Holy Monarchs Mirian and Nana, the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the Church of the Life-Giving Cross, the Monastery of St. Anthony the Stylite, the tomb of St. Nina in the convent dedicated to her in Bodbe and the spring of Holy Water dedicated to the Saint, the mountain and monastery of St. John of Zedazeni, the Community of the *Theotokos Portaitissa* and the Venerable Cross, the historic Chapel of St. George in a public park (where Divine Liturgies were celebrated by Father Basili Mkalavishvili in the open air during the time of persecution against anti-ecumenists), the historic center of the city of Tbilisi (the Sioni Cathedral, the Bridge of the Holy Martyrs, the Church of the Holy Queen Shushanik), the immense Patriarchal Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, and the hesychastic Betania Monastery, located to the west of Tbilisi.

Of greatest importance, however, was that chronic problems that have been plaguing the Diocese of Gldani, creating tensions and divisions among the clergy and laity, were addressed.



The tomb of St.
Anthony the Stylite

Meetings were held in which, in a spirit of love and humility, the groundwork was laid for the resolution of these problems, so as to restore, preserve, and strengthen our unity in Truth and love.

To this end, a plan of action and strategy was developed, that the anti-ecumenists of Georgia might henceforth be united with a common ecclesiastical mindset.



The Feast Day of the Church of the *Panagia Portaitissa*

Moreover, it came to our knowledge that there are certain other groups of anti-ecumenists in Georgia, which are not, however, in communion with our Holy Synod.

The *Locum Tenens* made a record of all of these factors so as to come to a full understanding of the ecclesiastical situation in Georgia, and also in order to take action towards the rapprochement, pacification, and unification, if possible, of the differing parties.



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On Tuesday, August 20, 2014 (Old Style), the group of pilgrims departed for Greece, with a stopover in Constantinople.

Despite the late hour (arrival at the Tbilisi airport at 2:30 a.m. for the 4:30 a.m. flight), many of the faithful, together with the four Priests, saw their Greek brothers and sisters off at the airport with expressions of heartfelt love and gratitude.

At 6:30 a.m. local time, we arrived in Constantinople, where we had the opportunity, until our afternoon flight to Athens, to visit a number of the places of Orthodox veneration, with a prevailing feeling of joyful sorrow: the Monastery of St. Theodore the Studite, the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen, the Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring (Baloukle), the First Greek Cemetery, the Church of St. Paraskeve in Pikridion (with the tomb and Holy Relics of the Holy New Martyr Argyre), Blachernæ (with its Holy Water fount), the Phanar (with the closed Gate of St. Gregory V, the Church of St. George, the



Monastery of St. Theodore the Studite



The Tomb of the Holy New Martyr Argyre, in Pikridion

Holy Relics of the Three Holy Hierarchs and of Sts. Solomone, Theophano, and Euphemia, and a part of the pillar against which our Lord was scourged), the Church (now a Mosque) of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos, the Hippodrome (with the three obelisks), and, finally, the glorious Church of Hagia Sophia!

At 7:30 p.m. we flew to Athens, arriving an hour later at the airport, where a group of our spiritual children welcomed us back to our homeland with great love.

Yet another pastoral visit had come to an auspicious outcome, for the edification of the Body of Christ, through the intercessions of the *Theotokos* and all of the Saints. Glory to God for all things!

Phyle, Attica (Greece),
August 22, 2014 (Old Style)

†Metropolitan Cyprian
of Oropos and Phyle



The Tomb of St. Nina, at the Convent dedicated to her in Bodbe.



Heading towards the Spring of St. Nina in Bodbe.



The Church of the Resurrection of our Lord, in Tbilisi.



The Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos, in Gldani, Tbilisi.



The Monastery of St. John of Zedazeni.



The Community of the *Theotokos Portaitissa* and the Venerable Cross, Zedazeni.



Agape meal at the *Portaitissa* parish.



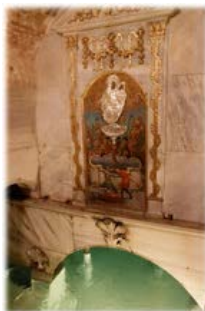
The Cross of St. Nina, Tbilisi.



The Church of St. George, in a park in Gldani, Tbilisi.



The Monastery of the Life-Giving Spring (Baloukle); Holy Water fount.



Blachernæ.



Left: the closed Gate of St. Gregory V at the Phanar; above: the Monastery of Sts. Sergios and Bacchos; right: Hagia Sophia

